

NSC BRIEFING

4 OCTOBER 1955

23 OCTOBER SAAR REFERENDUM

- I. Close vote is likely in forthcoming referendum on acceptance or rejection of the "European Statute," by which Saar's defense and foreign affairs would come under Western European Union, while the area would maintain internal political autonomy and close economic ties to France.
 - A. Rejection would have serious consequences for French-German relations, since "European Statute" is part of Paris Accords "package," which permitted West German rearmament.
- II. Vigorous--sometimes violent--anti-Statute campaign has ruled out earlier expectations of approval by substantial majority.
 - A. Pro-German parties, banned till referendum campaign opened in late July, have whipped up much nationalist sentiment.
 1. They argue that France can be forced to make an agreement more favorable to German interests.
 2. Most Bonn political parties have covertly assisted the campaign, despite Adenauer's repeated endorsement of the Statute.
 3. The bishops of Trier and Speyer, whose dioceses include the strongly Catholic Saar, have indirectly indicated disapproval of Statute by failure to disavow pro-German propaganda claims that the Church opposes it.

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- B. Only known poll (early Sep) showed heavy majority of Saarlanders against Statute.
- III. In past month, pro-Statute forces, led by Saar premier Johannes Hoffmann and his large Christian People's Party, have staged counterattack.
- A. Pro-Statute campaigners are stressing lack of effective alternative to projected settlement, Saar's better economic prospects under it.
- B. Early rowdiness of anti-Statute campaign has alienated some who were originally inclined to oppose statute.
- C. Statement by papal emissary in Saarbrücken on 27 Sep ("vote according to your conscience") undercut claims of pro-German leaders that Church opposes Statute.
- D. Christian People's Party showed its confidence in outcome by voting almost unanimously in party congress (2 Oct) not to reverse position favoring Statute (such repudiation had been urged for party tactical reasons).
- E. Hoffmann, the Saar's most experienced politician, privately predicted (in mid-Sep) a 60 percent favorable vote.
- IV. Balance of evidence suggests 23 Oct vote will be close, with emotion generated by campaign raising political dangers, whatever the outcome.
- V. Should Statute win approval by narrow margin, pro-German disturbances might follow. However, recent reports discount this threat.

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- A. Anticipated announcement of WEU intention to create special international police force ready to intervene should have restraining effect.
 - B. Pro-Germans would probably confine themselves to efforts to vote Hoffmann out in special 4 Dec '55 Landtag elections.
 - C. Nevertheless, Communists, who were reported responsible for much of earlier violence, might again stir up disorder.
- VI. Should Statute be rejected by narrow margin, Paris would be encouraged to reimpose control, with Hoffmann reimposing bans on pro-German parties and calling off Landtag elections until next regularly scheduled (1957).
- A. French reimposition of controls would infuriate West German opinion. Adenauer's foreign policy would suffer blow over collapse of key element in French-German rapprochement.
 - B. More probable, however, that France would accept temporary continuation WEU control of Saar, should this be proposed by Germans pending new agreement.
- VII. It is still possible that referendum will be postponed. This will probably be discussed tomorrow (5 Oct) by Faure and Adenauer, as way to allow the electorate to become more fully informed on consequences of vote.

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